

Epperson (J. P.)

A

BOMB IN THE CAMP OF THE ENEMY,

OR AN

EXPOSURE OF QUACKERY

AND "PATENT MEDICINES."

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BY J. P. EPPERSON,  
OF PULASKI, TENN.

*Box*  
COLUMBIA:

PRINTED BY ROSBOROUGH & KIDD.  
1845.



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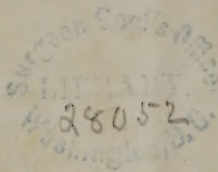
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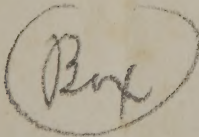
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## AN EXPOSURE OF QUACKERY, ETC.

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The main force of the following essay is designed to be directed against PATENT MEDICINES and their *authors*. But it may be well to glance at Quackery in other forms, and at the popular errors concerning the Medical Art—the soil in which *quackery*, in every form, is nourished and supported.

The multitude are “in all things too superstitious.” In all times, the imagination has had the ascendancy over correct observation and sound reason. Few have been able to appreciate the maxim, that “man knows nothing of nature’s laws but what he actually experiences.” The history of the human mind is the history of its perpetual deviations from the path of *common sense*, led captive by every vagrant ignis-fatuus of *fancy*, into the doleful regions of folly, superstition and disappointment.

The multitude have ever been more ready to rely on mere chimeras than their actual sober senses, through which God intended they should *know* the truth. They always attach more importance to dreams and visions than to what they actually see and feel. They *feel* and *see* an object to be one thing, and yet *believe* it to be something else. They have ever been ready to believe images of wood and stone to be gods; to follow any impostor, however base; to embrace every pretended revelation, however grossly fabricated; to believe every *wonderful* doctrine, or pretended event, however absurd. — However strange, it is true, that men do not wish to see and believe things as they really exist. They are disgus-

ted with unvarnished truth, and seek to look through the mediums of wonder and mysticism. They have a contempt for plain, well-ascertained truths, and time-tried doctrines, founded on facts, oft-repeated experiments, and strict inductive reasoning. Hence the continual, eager pursuit after imposing novelties, and the continual rejection of them when their nature is well understood.

These remarks are applicable to men in all things; but they are more particularly applicable to them in regard to their conduct in reference to the practice of the Medical Art. Whatever may be said of the general diffusion of knowledge, and the enlightened state of the present age, it is certain that many remnants of superstition still remain in the popular notions of *Medicine*.

We look back with mingled pity and indignation to our American ancestors, who were superstitious enough to accuse, try, condemn and execute, for alleged acts of witchcraft, persons so unfortunate as to fall under their suspicion. Yet many of the notions of the present day are little more enlightened. We still find that spells of witchery are prominent in the conjectural causes of maladies; and that the conjurations of "faith doctors," and various charms, and idle verbal ceremonies and mystic manual manœuvres, are believed to be efficacious in curing diseases.

This superstition shows itself in another form, in the popular veneration for *Indian* remedies. I have known many famous quacks, whose reputation rested solely on their reputed knowledge of "old Indian remedies." What a wretched state of intelligence must that be, which venerates and cherishes the traditions and crude notions of that absolutely ignorant and stupid race!—a race, which, in respect to all proper human characteristics, are but little elevated above the stupid beasts which they hunt and slay! What sort of intelligence is that which is captivated more by a remedy, or notion of *Indian* renown, than by the experiments and opinions of the most enlightened

and scientific men? The venerators of Indian physic should be consistent, and go on to adopt Indian religion, Indian morals, and Indian government; or, more correctly speaking, Indian heathenism, brutism, and barbarism; or, in a word, Indian ignorance and stupidity.

Quackery assumes so many shapes, that it is useless to notice it in all its forms. One grand division of it is known in the form of ignorant babblers against "regular practice," and "*mineral pizens*." Every age and country has been infested by such ignoramuses; but the present age and this country appear to have more than their proportional share of them.

These upstarts in medicine, railing at regular physicians, remind us of a child in his letters railing at Newton, or Bacon. They know as little of Medical Science, as the Flat-head Indians know of the improved state of knowledge, the Arts and Sciences, civil government, and the elegancies, and refinements of life, in the United States. The Medical world is to them, what the natural world was to the ancient navigators creeping along the shore, without chart or compass,—a vast unexplored region, which their imaginations picture a desolate, unvariegated, flat surface, terminating in a grand jumping-off place. They are now groping their uncertain way in the darkness of ignorance which shrouded the beginners in Medicine, twenty centuries ago. They profess to set aside the knowledge gained by the labors of the Physicians who have lived for the last two thousand years, and to set up for themselves, on their own unenlightened experience of a short life-time. I would not discourage them, however, for if they propagate their species till the year of our Lord four thousand, and prove to have the Caucasian brain, and use the same labor of experiment and investigation, they may be as wise at the expiration of that period, as the regular faculty now are.

One of the tenets of these clamorous tyros, is, that ev-



every man can and ought to be his own physician. This doctrine comports precisely with their limited conceptions of the nature of Medical Science. In their estimation, all that is necessary to cure diseases, is to go through a certain routine of steaming, and administering stimulating medicines, with entire indifference as to the nature of the case, the organ affected, the stage of the disease, or any other circumstance. And certainly every man could do that.

To prevent any from hazarding their lives by adopting, as many have done, an error so captivating from its simplicity, and so fatal from its utter falsity, I ask permission to offer a *reason* against it.

Man knows nothing of the effects of any substance upon the human system, except by actual trial. And on account of the vast number of substances in nature, perhaps a thousand were tried before one could be found, whose effects were desirable. It may be imperfectly conjectured then, how great a number of substances must have been *tried* to discover the medical properties in their *various* relations to the human system, of the *efficient* remedial agents now used. Medical science then, as it exists, is not the experience of one man, or of one age. But it is the *accumulated* experience of *all* physicians, of more than two thousand years. It is a system which *must* have been, and *has* been built, like the coral reef, by the long continued and joint labors of a vast multitude.

To understand this accumulated *experience*, a man must understand the subjects of it, in all their relations. And these subjects, and their relations, embrace Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, Botany, Materia Medica, Pharmacy, and the theory and practice of Medicine.

Now when a man with a good head has studied thoroughly these sciences, with some others, he may begin to think of being his own Physician, and not before; unless he pre-



fers acting in the utter darkness of conjecture, to the guidance of meridian sun-light of long tried principles. And he that would, after due reflection, make that choice, is a fool.

If there is *skill* in any thing, it is in the successful practice of Medicine. It would be much more reasonable to say, that every man ought to make and mend his own watch, than that every man ought to be his own Physician. For the mechanism and actions of the human system are as much more abstruse than those of a watch, as the endowments of a living being, excel those of inert matter.

Another measure of these modern sciolists, is an unqualified opposition against what they are pleased to call "*mineral pizens.*" This opposition to minerals is founded in *theoretical* ignorance; for it is settled beyond dispute, by the *experience* of all intelligent Physicians, that some of our most efficient medical agents belong to the mineral kingdom. These *raw materials* have learned by some means that vegetables are *generally* more digestible than mineral substances; and have hence concluded, that therefore those only are suitable for Medicines. They seem not to know that *animal* substances are more digestible than either, and that therefore, according to their theory, they ought to administer beef and pork to their patients. The medical powers of a substance do not depend on its digestibility. The opposite is true—the indigestibility of a substance is the very quality that makes it a Medicine. If it could be digested, it would no longer be a Medicine, but a nutritive.

But the admission that vegetables are more digestible than minerals is only general. For some of the most virulent poisons known, belong to the vegetable kingdom; for example, tobacco, lobelia, prussic acid, and the poisonous upas. While on the other hand, some of the most innocent, useful and most indispensable condiments are found

in the mineral kingdom; for example, salt petre, carbonate of soda, salætatus, and above all, common salt, an article as indispensable to man's existence as bread.

But it is doubtful whether these *pretenders* ever dreamed that common salt is a mineral. We must presume this from their clamorous war against *all* minerals. But they *ought* to know that common salt is not only a mineral, but approaches very nearly in *composition* to *calomel*, that great bug-bear of modern quackery — one being composed of chlorine and the metal sodium, and the other of chlorine and the metal mercury.

But these are only the suburbs of quackery; we have yet to examine the most magnificent parts of it. In the form of *nostrums*, commonly called "*patent medicines*," and their flaming advertisements, we have an exhibition of it at once sublime and ridiculous.

If a man opens a newspaper, whether religious, literary, or political, he is startled from his seat, as if by Jove's thunder from Olympus' heights, by such awful exclamations as these; behold! unrivalled! magical! mystical! electrical! 'tis found at last! &c. And immediately, as if these epithetical exclamations had called up supernatural agents of transformation, we behold skeletons suddenly clothed with flesh and fat; the haggard spectres of disease, changed in a moment into the habiliments of vigorous health, and time-worn bald-heads, which had faced the thunder and lightning for half a century, quickly covered with glossy hair waving majestically, like the cedars on Mount Lebanon's venerable top.

Not newspapers only abound with the bombastic and pictorial representations of the powers of these gross impositions; but growing more bold by habitual effrontery, they now begin to go forth accompanied by pamphlets, almanacs, and polished cards impressed with fascinating devices of their wonderful virtues. All these are like the blazoned advertisements of "splendid lotteries," or painted

bills of menageries of strange animals, or of circus performances, or of wonderful feats of strength, double somersets and lofty tumblings. And like them, the magnificent *bills* are the principal part of the "show."

These are not new tricks; every age and every country has been infested by them. And governments, as well as individuals, have been duped into the folly, at different times, of offering large rewards for the revelation of the composition of such miraculous agents. And in every instance, so soon as the spell of mystery was broken, the article sunk into insignificance and neglect, never to rise. So true is it, that men are the more ardent in proportion to their ignorance of the subject of their enthusiasm.

It is impossible to ascertain the number of patent medicines issued in the world. It is probable (to take a view of a definite time and space) that twenty thousand have been issued in the United States, in the last half century. And each one has been proclaimed by extravagant certificates, and pompous assertions of thousands cured, to be *the* infallible remedy for some disease, or more generally for *all* diseases. And every one, although infallible, has disappeared from the light of *trial*, like gaseous meteors from the morning sun, in less than a dozen years from the time of its fabrication.

What a loss to the world! Twenty thousand *infallible* cures wholly lost, just because people had no more discretion than to *try* them! But every state of despair has its hope; so has this. As the fabled monster sprung a hundred heads where one was amputated, so for every infallible remedy lost by the folly of trial, a hundred infallible new ones are discovered! And stranger still, the people are *now* as ardent in the pursuit of infallible cures as they ever were, although they have been deceived by them twenty thousand times before! What monstrous infatuation! And what is the cause of it?

The chief cause of it is that the public mind has no fixed



and definite principles concerning the nature of disease, nor the *rational* methods of its cure. And therefore it is to be regretted that the study of the general principles of medicine, in which all are deeply interested, does not form a part of popular education. The want of definite principles, gives loose rein to the extravagancies of the imagination and the wildest Utopian schemes. In religion, it leads to fanaticism in all its forms,—to the belief of special revelations, insensible spiritual operations, and the sanctification and deification of mere earthly beings, although the *senses feel* and *see* them to be mere organized objects, with all their inherent imperfections and mortality.

In chemistry, it leads to the ridiculous search of a fancied alcahest, and the imaginary art of transmuting the gross metals into gold, although it is evident to the senses, and to reason, and is demonstrated by experiments, that every substance has a definite and fixed relation to all other substances, and a definite, specific form, which are essential to its existence, and therefore unchangeable.

In philosophy, it induces the hope of discovering some social or political scheme which will make men *perfect* on earth, although all experience proves that human nature is essentially the same under all systems and circumstances.

In mechanics, it prompts ingenuity to the efforts of discovering the perpetual motion, although that was long since demonstrated to be a mechanical impossibility.

And so in medicine, the want of definite principles leads to the fanciful quest of fountains of rejuvenescence, and the vain hope of discovering one remedy for *all* diseases, or at least a specific remedy for *each* disease, although the obvious fact that the same disease presents many points of variation in every different person, and even in the same person at different times, and in different circumstances, renders the hope totally and plainly absurd.

Another cause of this infatuation is that disposition in men to become more sanguine in adventures of *chance*

than in pursuits of an opposite nature. As the gambler plays and loses a thousand times, his gaming passion increasing and his hopes brightening by every loss, till at last, grown desperate in hope, he stakes his life on the "cast of a die;" so the victim of disease, resolved to be cured by *chance*, becomes more sanguine by every disappointment, and his final dying struggles are in hot pursuit of the last "infallible cure."

Another cause is, that the newspapers of all sorts give more space to the flaming announcements of *nostrums*, and innumerable certificates of their wonderful virtues, than to religion, literature or politics. And many find it impossible not to believe what they see "in print." For my own part, if I wished to see an unvarnished lie, in all its native dimensions and habits, and in its native land and element, I would just open a newspaper. I look upon newspapers *generally* as the *sinks* for the base passions, into which are drained the scurrility, rascality and falsehood, which men are ashamed, or afraid to utter personally.

If a man were to go into company, and assert orally that his "balsam" had cured seven thousand cases of confirmed consumption, he would be kicked out of it as an impudent liar. But when he asserts the *same* in a newspaper, it is thought the assertion may have some truth in it.

I will quote here a specimen, a newspaper advertisement of a certain pill:

"INDIAN VEGETABLE PILLS,"

"For the cure of diseases in the form of Intermittent, Remittent, Nervous, Inflammatory, and Putrid Fevers; Measles, Small-pox and Erysipelas; Inflammation of the Throat, Stomach, Lungs, Liver, Intestines, Kidnies and Bladder; Pains in the Stomach, Back and Side; Consumption; Dropsy of the Head, of the Chest, of the Abdomen and Limbs; Scrofula, Scurvy and Syphilis; Cancer; Gravel; Loss of Appetite; Sick Headache; Rheumatism, both acute and Chronic; Spitting of Blood; Diarrhœa, Dysentery and Colics; Syncope; Apoplexy and Paralysis; Dys-

*pepsia, Hypochondriasis, Tetanus, Epilepsy, Hooping-Cough; Palpitations of the Heart; Ulcers and Sores of every description; Hysterics, weak Nerves and low spirits; Suppression and other delicate female complaints."*

This is a fair specimen of nostrum advertisements, with which at least one page of almost every newspaper is filled. I leave this barefaced, contemptible, empty bluster to comment upon itself; for surely it is absolutely ridiculous "*per se*."

To oppose the empty pretensions of patent medicines by serious argumentation, seems on the one hand ludicrous, but on the other necessary. I shall therefore examine them, briefly, as though they had some *apparent* claims to notice, which they have not.

Medical Science, as I said before, is the accumulated product of the experience of thousands of years. And the discoveries in it, of an *individual*, are no more, compared with the whole, than a brook compared with the ocean.—The improvements in every science must necessarily be made slowly by the small contributions to it by individual experiments, in almost every part of the world. And in every department of knowledge, a *thousand pretended* discoveries are announced to *one* that proves, after investigation, to be useful or important. In practical Medicine, discoveries are infinitely more slowly made than in any other science; because the sacredness of human life forbids the practice of the unrestrained experiments that may be made on other subjects. And when a pretended discovery in Medicine is announced, the remedy must be tried by many Physicians, and in many varying circumstances before its efficacy can be fully admitted.

It is plain, then, from these considerations, that the *nostrum maker* is in a dilemma. He has either discovered more by mere *accident* than the whole world before; or, his remedy has no merit founded on his and other's experience in many varying circumstances; or, this experience has



been gained by the vast hazard of doing infinite mischief; or, he has made a hap-hazard combination, knowing but little of its qualities, for the purpose of making money. The latter is most probably *his* horn of the dilemma.

Again: It rarely falls to the lot of one man to make more than one great discovery, in the course of a few years. But, behold the genius of the manufacturers of patent medicines! Not only an infallible remedy is found for *one* disease, but infallible cures for a *dozen* diseases, by the same infallible man! And that, too, in as short a time as he can turn his attention from one to the other! He is truly fortunate who happened to be placed in the midst of a dozen infallible cures, having nothing to do but to turn about and take them up;—but he is more fortunate still, who has not the trouble to find a *dozen* remedies for the cure of as many diseases, but simply to discover *one* grand infallible remedy which at one fell swoop cures all diseases. A man need only know that he is sick, no matter how, and then swallow this almighty physic, and his disease falls prostrate, like the walls of Jerico fell by the *blowing of sheep's* horns. These contemptible pretensions are equally as absurd as the conduct of the Spaniard, who by force of arms boldly took possession of the whole Pacific ocean, by valiantly wading into its margin, with shield and spear raised in a pugnacious attitude, and loudly proclaiming his indisputable right to it.

Moreover, these discoverers contradict themselves.—Each one informs the public that *his* medicine *alone* is valuable, and that all others are rascally impositions.—This game of mutual crimination goes on till, like the celebrated cats, they eat each other *almost* totally up. These witnesses, therefore, of equal *incredulity*, destroy the testimony of each other.

The same may be said of the certificates which always accompany these miraculous agents. Each one of the tens of thousands, which are now no more, was attended by

many letters certifying that *it* was certainly *the* infallible cure. Now this circumstance proves one of several things: either that the certificates were forged; or that the witnesses asserted wilful falsehoods; or that they testified of that of which they were incompetent to judge. For if these articles had possessed a thousandth part of the virtues ascribed to them, they never could have sunk into total oblivion; but we would now have, perhaps, a hundred thousand infallible cures in battle array, to testify to the unbounded liberality of Providence, in dispensing medicines, and discoverers of them, for the relief of his suffering creatures! When witnesses are caught lying, either from design or ignorance, they ought to be discredited forever afterwards.

Again: Although these “wonderful cures” have loudly threatend to annihilate the whole tribe of human maladies wherever they pass, yet we *see* no diminution of disease in their course. Look, for example, at consumption, that impudent “*wind-mill*,” in conflict with which the Don Quixotes of modern quackery have broken many a lance. If one hundredth part of the professions of patent balsams, and syrups, and lozenges, etc., were half true, this naughty disease would not dare to show its head, for the war of extermination waged against it.— But what is the fact? It not only exists, but is increasing the number of its victims. Not only so, but it presumes to “carry the war into Africa.” For in the cities of New York and Philadelphia, where these terrible consumption slayers are *forged* and swallowed in immense numbers, the disease is perhaps *more* fatal than in any other place. Surely then, if these boasted engines of war cannot defend their own cities from the attacks of the enemy, they ought not to be sent abroad to do battle.

But we need not go from home for evidence. Let every man look around him. And certainly no one is simple enough to believe certificates, rather than his own

eyes, when he has an opportunity to observe for *himself* that of which they certify. I have been behind the scenes, and have witnessed the wire-work of these impostors to palm this "Punch and Devil" show of patent medicines upon the public. I have watched their effects; and I cannot say that I have ever seen a patient permanently benefitted by them more than by sage tea, or rhubarb, or any other simple remedy. Their tremendous effects, like all other deeds of the superlative kind, are located so far off that no *particular* person can see them.

Any remedy given at random, may accidentally do good. So beneficial effects may occasionally follow the random use of nostrums, but not more frequently than would follow the use of salts or manna. The truth is, most of the "magical cures" now puffed into notice, are composed of simple ingredients whose medical properties are well understood by the medical profession. And many of them, of ingredients long since tried and laid aside for more efficient articles. They are gleaned from the worthless remnants after the harvest was reaped. The composition is kept secret for the purpose of riveting the imposition. For it is known by the observers of human nature, that there are a thousand followers of mystery to one of plain truth. It is true that some of them *pretend* to deal plainly, by giving the name of the principal ingredient. But at the same time they feign *its* wonderful virtues to result from the secret *manner* of combination. Like a boasting cook, who would have all to believe that the nutritive qualities of bread depend upon her peculiar skill of mixing it with eggs, or lard, or some other indigestible substance. Nature has endowed every substance with definite properties, and it would be as easy to raise water above its fountain without force, as to make these properties anything but what they are.

Simplicity is the great attainment of excellency in any art. It is so in machinery, in government, and pre-emi-



nently so in medicine. The whole difference between the adept and the bungler in any art is this: the one uses simple means to produce many different effects; the other uses many different means to produce a single effect, and then that effect is produced in an imperfect manner. It is the best mark of a *quack* to see him making a compound of a *dozen* ingredients, particularly if he possesses no definite knowledge of the properties of either. I knew one who collected in a vial the remnants (without proving them) of medicines left in the neighborhood by physicians, and when applied to he invariably gave his patient a dose of the mixture.

*Complications* of disease frequently require *combinations* of remedies; but these complications being different in every different case, require a different combination for each particular case. The whole pretence, then, of the efficacy founded on combination in *general* remedies, is a gross attempt at imposition.

Sarsaparilla, Wild Cherry, and many other simple articles, now worked into tremendous compounds, are useful in their proper places. Persons entertaining reasonable views of them are not often disappointed in their effects. And they are generally most efficient in their simple, unadulterated forms. But *now*, there is a "Sands' Sarsaparilla" and a "Balsam of Wild Cherry" fever prevailing, which will most certainly lead to disappointment, and then to abuse. And like poor Tray in the fable, these innocent and useful medicines will be "most cruelly treated, for no other reason than being found in bad company." But by that time the authors of their misfortunes will be safely quartered in the citadel of wealth, while angry disappointment may vainly rage around them.

But who are these medical prodigies of the nineteenth century? The most of them are Northern *quacks* with Southern pills. They belong to the land of "Yankee notions." They are co-laborers with the manufacturers of

wooden nutmegs and wooden hams. They are a part of that tribe of Yankee pedlars who infest the South with all kinds of impositions that Yankee noddles can invent; for nearly all of the nostrums that flood the country in every part of it, are made in the Northern States, the most of them in New York and Philadelphia. Now if the authors of them are not vile impostors, the question is, where did they get their extra knowledge? Has nature been so partial as to produce a thousand great discoveries in the North where she produces one in the South? Or has some kind angel revealed to them, as to John in Patmos, the wonders of heaven and earth that common mortals are not permitted to behold? The medical men of all countries hold intimate correspondence. When a real discovery is made by one, it is soon tested and adopted by all; and all believe and practice the same general doctrines. The physicians of the North and the South read the same books, and many of them attend the same lectures together. And more than this: the respectable portion of *both* denounce patent medicines openly and contemptuously. Then if the most respectable physicians of their own cities are unbelievers in the divine mission of these pretenders to miracles, it becomes them to show their credentials; and as I am rather an unbeliever in divine missions generally, I will attempt to explain their pretensions by *natural laws*, which is the plan of all infidels.

It is a natural law, incontestibly established, that Yankees, as well as others, are fond of money. It is equally well established, that many of them are opposed to following ordinary and useful occupations to gain it. Hence they invent all sorts of notions. It is also certain that they are shrewd enough to "*guess*" that, as the people are generally captivated by pompous novelties from a distance, and the South is in a state of commercial dependency on the North, they can conveniently tack on a medical dependency likewise. It is certain, too, that the Northern

States, and particularly the large cities, are overstocked with physicians and druggists, so that all of them cannot make fortunes by regular business. Hence, the inferior members of both classes, who are unable to withstand honorable competition, are engaged in collecting cheap and refused materials and making random compounds, which they attempt to thrust down the public throat with all the impudence characteristic of practiced impostors. This I think is the true account of the origin of patent medicines, and these considerations alone ought to damn them in the estimation of every sensible man. But to make the absurdity of their pretensions more evident, I will offer some other arguments more conclusive.

*Skill*, in any art, consists in the application of proper means to produce certain effects, under *different circumstances*. The successful prosecution of any business depends wholly on the close attention to varying circumstances, and acting according to them. In the practice of no art is it so necessary to vary means, to meet changing conditions, as in medicine; because the human system is a living machine, and therefore it is ever varying, both in health and disease.

Disease varies — 1st. According to age. Its symptoms, course, complications and termination, are very different in infancy and old age.

2ndly. Disease varies according to constitution. Men's constitutions are as diverse as their faces, or as the strength of their passions or mental powers; and each constitution is affected as peculiarly by the same disease as each mind by the same cause.

3rdly. Disease varies according to the previous habits of the patient. Modes of living, with respect to labor and indolence, moderation and intemperance, etc., at once present diversities innumerable.

4thly. Disease varies according to the stage of it. Although an individual may be said to be afflicted with the



same disease for ten years, yet it is not the same in *degree* of action any two days in the whole period, any more than a person is the same in infancy and old age; or in sickness and in health, as it respects bodily and mental weakness or vigor.

5thly. Disease varies according to complications. And these complications, in *kind* and *degree*, are as numerous as the mind can possibly conceive. Disease of the stomach, for example, is liable at any time to become complicated with disease of the brain, the lungs, bowels, liver, spleen, kidneys, bladder, etc., and each of these complications varies infinitely as to degree.

I might mention the modifications of disease produced by sex, climate, seasons, and many other causes; but I have noticed a sufficient number for my present purpose.

In view, then, of the innumerable variations of disease produced by age, sex, climate, stage, habits, complications, etc., and of the fact that no two persons are equally impressible by the same medicine and dose, in the same circumstances, how utterly absurd is the pretension that any one remedy, administered without regard to these modifying causes, can *cure* any malady, or even be beneficial in it except by mere accident. This pretension is just as absurd as that of a workman in New York who would assert that he had invented a hammer, a tap with which would repair any watch, no matter how or where disordered; or as that of a N. York tailor who would cut and make all his coats exactly the same size, and assert that they would fit any man, from a dwarf up to Daniel Lambert; or as the conduct of a general, who would have declared his intention of conquering the Seminole Indians by marching his army directly forward to the Gulf of Mexico, without regard to the probability of ambuscades, retreats, and rear attacks of the enemy. Whoever is prepared to swallow such pretensions, is also prepared to swallow a still-worm with a straight rod of iron thrust through it.

It is difficult to convince the world that *names* are not *things*. Medical men are frequently asked what is good in a certain disease, as though the treatment of it depended on its name. The skilful physician prescribes for symptoms as they occur, not for names. For as I said before, a thousand different symptoms may present themselves in the same disease, modified by the many causes which were enumerated above: so that a remedy which would be beneficial to a patient one day might kill him the next.

But if there *were* such a thing as a specific for any disease that might be given without regard to modifying circumstances, what then? A great difficulty would still exist, namely: the sick man is liable to be mistaken in the nature of his malady ninety times in a hundred. For example: All the prominent symptoms of Consumption may be produced by inflammation of the lining membrane of the lungs, by chronic pleurisy, by inflammation of the top of the wind-pipe, by enlargement of the soft palate, by inflammation of the liver, stomach, mesenteric glands, etc. We know how ready persons are to conclude that they are afflicted with consumption, while time proves it to be something else. And it is notorious that persons who certainly have that disease are very slow to believe it. It is clear, then, that a specific would be taken in the wrong case ninety-nine times in a hundred at least. Now I see no way for the patient to obviate this difficulty but by sending for a skilful *Southern* physician to ascertain the nature of his disease, and then sending to a *Northern* specific maker, who never heard of him, to cure him.

I have yet to point out a few of the *evils* of the popular use of patent medicines, and close. If a remedy produces any effect at all, that effect must be either beneficial or hurtful. I have already proved satisfactorily, I think, that the use of random remedies must be improper, and conse-

quently hurtful in ninety-nine cases in a hundred. Therefore the proportion of their bad to their good effects, is as ninety-nine to one hundred, in round numbers. They must almost necessarily do harm — they can do good by accident only. The common belief that mild medicines can do no harm, if they do no good, is a fatal mistake. Many a man has lost his life by taking a common dose of salts or oil. When the system is nearly balanced between life and death, very little may turn the scale; and even when the patient is far from that extremity, the mildest medical agent improperly applied, may give him a downhill impulse, which he may never be able to recover from. To say that a remedy can do no injury, is equivalent to saying that it can have no effect at all; and therefore it should not be used, on account of the trouble of it, if for no other reason. This reasoning is on the supposition that *nostrums* are all mild; but this is not the fact.— I have seen the worst consequences follow the use of a few doses of violent, drastic, patent *vegetable* pills. This consoling but deceptive epithet, *vegetable*, slays its thousands. For it is known that the most violent medicines used, belong to the vegetable kingdom.

Again: dependence on these fraudulent compounds in the treatment of maladies, prevents the application of the proper means of cure at the proper time. If there is any efficacy in medical treatment at all, it must be in the early stages of disease, before it fixes its strong holds in the vitals of the system. How mischievously foolish, then, is the conduct of that man who, while disease is deepening its ravages, spends time in experimenting with articles made perhaps by Northern swindlers, out of materials of the properties of which they had no correct knowledge, and which may be as far from meeting the nature of his case as sin is from holiness.

The last consideration I offer, will, I flatter myself, strike nearer to the seat of the soul, and dig deeper about

the roots of human reason, than any mentioned before.— Much has been said of the South paying tribute to the North; and Northern nostrums are no inconsiderable channel by which Southern *money* is drained into Northern pockets. Some of these pill-makers boast, by way of giving their pills greater popularity, that they sell annually a million boxes. Now when we consider the vast number manufactured, we can form some estimate of the vast amount of money paid for the most contemptible of all impositions.

In conclusion, I will anticipate and answer a charge that will be made against me. I will be charged with the design of endeavoring to write down patent medicine, so that the business of Physicians may be increased. But my arguments all go to show that *they* will finally make business for Physicians. Therefore these arguments ought to be proved to be false, before my motives should be suspected. For if they are *true*, I am writing against my interest.

Finally, if the strictures against patent medicines, contained in these pages, shall by any means provoke the manufacturers of them, or their coadjutors, to expressions of censure, I wish *now* to say to them, what a distinguished statesman once said of his calumniators, they shall "have what they richly deserve, my ineffable contempt."





